



Figure 1: Pitch at the Barrier-Gate. Langdale Valley, Cumbria. Author's Own (2013)

Merz Merz Merz Merz: Performing the Remains of Mr. Kurt Schwitters

By Penny Newell

Abstract

This paper opens up questions about the methodological practice of critical writing about collage art. As Elza Adamowicz astutely suggests, to respond to the alterity of collage is to negotiate a route through wordless *jouissance*, inarticulate pointing, and stammering emotion, toward speaking sense. The twofold object of this study is to problematise the act of making sense of the collage works of the artist Kurt Schwitters, and through that to enact a methodological experiment in performative writing. Initially, I stage an analysis of the artist's late collage works, seeking to define Schwitters's neologism *Merz*. Yet, I do so only in order to pass through that definition to a crisis of clarity, critiquing lucidity and deploring the implied possibility of describing the formal synthetic identity of works the nature of which is to remain fragmentary in form, nonsensical in meaning and beyond critical comprehension. The paper thus proceeds into self-effacement, becoming the remains of an alternative methodological research journey, made in response to *Merz*.

I looked for a collective name for this new genre, as I could not classify my pictures in old terms, like Expressionism, Cubism, Futurism or such-like. I called all my pictures as a genre, after the characteristic picture, Merzpictures.

Themerson quoting Kurt Schwitters, *Schwitters in England*

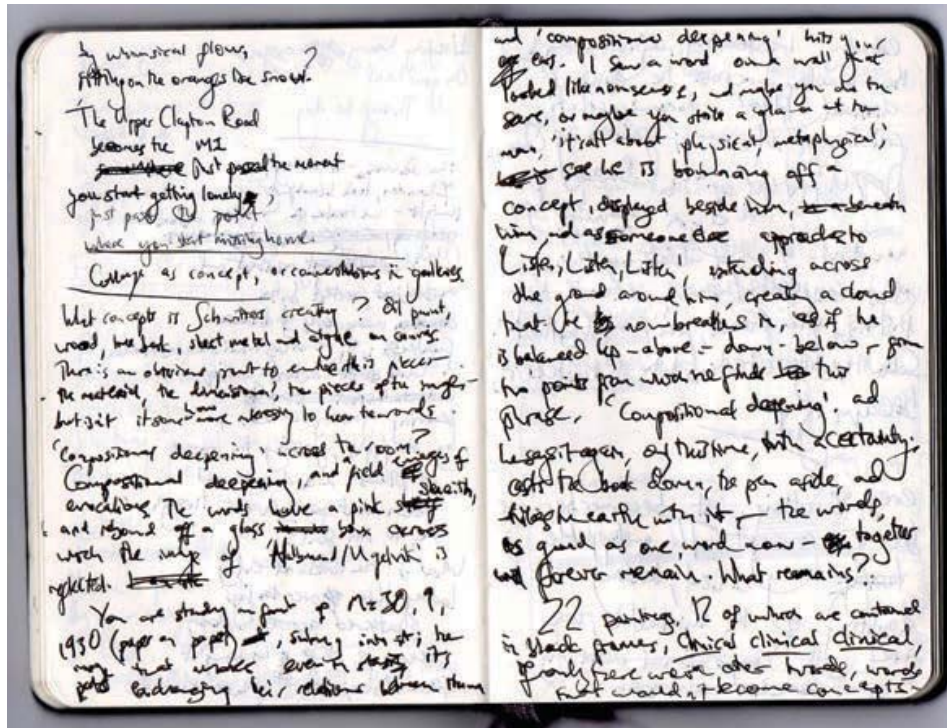


Figure 2: Collage as a Concept, or conversations in galleries. Author's Notebook (2013)

'Compositional Deepening', and a field emerges of evocations. The words have a pink sheith [sic], and rebound off a glass, box across which/watch the image of 'Halbmond/Ugelvik' is reflected. You are standing in front of Mz 30, 9, 1930 (paper on paper) and, sinking into it; the image that moves even in stasis, its parts exchanging their relations between them/trauma and 'compositional deepening' hits your ears.

Preface

This article principally reflects upon the late collage works of the twentieth century German artist Kurt Schwitters, pertaining to a period of exile from Nazi Germany spent in

Britain from 1940 to 1948. In particular, this article responds to the works produced from 1945 to 1948, when Schwitters lived and died in Cumbria. This became an ideal access point for several reasons. Firstly, the 2013 *Schwitters in Britain* exhibition at Tate Britain invited fresh critical interest in this period, awakening new thoughts in this extended project of methodological reflection. Secondly, and more specifically, whilst Schwitters's artistic output from his time in rural seclusion in Cumbria – including the portraits he was forced to produce and sell for subsistence – are often seen as redolent of the isolation or cultural banishment of exile, an important resistance to this conclusion stemmed from a pre-existing artistic connection I have to this area of Britain. There are places with which we may, as writers, make critical contact, whilst there are other places that could only ever function as reason and logic-transcendent platforms for shadowy acts of poetry.

Defining *Merz*

There is no neat narrative to collage. Indeed, with the eruption of pictorial signification into a surface of fragments, Dadaist collage and assemblage pieces of the early twentieth century came to contain, as Christine Poggi suggests, 'myriad paradoxical and contradictory clues' (117), for critical exegesis. This is not to say that our critical relationship to collage works is not one that foregrounds a process of narration; collage, as Elza Adamowicz writes, leads us down a route through wordless *jouissance*, inarticulate pointing, silent fascination and stammering emotion, toward speaking sense: that is, down a route toward troublingly eliding the nonsensical nature of the work about which we speak (Adamowicz 5). Indeed, the myriad clues contained in collage perhaps invite this imposition of critical narrative, and it is this fragmentary invitation, luring critics toward collage, which I will first address.

Take as an example the work *Untitled: Y.M.C.A OFFICIAL FLAG THANK YOU*, made by Schwitters in the year 1947: a collage of text and images, produced using the materials of oil, paper and cardboard. This collage is disproportionately dominated by a monotonously olive-painted piece of card; whilst the upper two thirds of the right of the collage bustle and

clamour with colour, text and image, this olive section is only interrupted by three small pieces of paper, one of which contains a blue stamp. This stamp functions to draw our eye to the upper left of the collage, where – dirtied yet clearly legible – we find an envelope, bearing the Ambleside address of the final home of ‘Mr. Kurt Schwitters’.

The attention that this envelope demands introduces multiple breakages and tensions of disruption into the work. Firstly, we are drawn to reflect upon the disjunction between the mechanically produced, typewritten name – Mr. Kurt Schwitters – found on the envelope, and the unfaltering human hand behind the familiar signature upon the work. This tension opens the possibility of a further disjunction, that is, the phonetic apposition of the Teutonic ‘Mr. Kurt Schwitters’, and the Old French ‘*Ambleside*’. I would argue that this brings us to further reflect that, whilst ‘Mr. Kurt Schwitters’ is clearly the correct addressee of 4 Milans [sic] Park, this self-evident fact carries none of the sense of ease or belonging expressed so vividly through the undisrupted flow of the handwritten signature. The collage is thus overcast with a sense of paradoxical self-fragmentation, exposing an identity status that is at once conflicting yet cohesive, multiple yet singular; a narrative of exile made evident across the visual axis of the plane of the assemblage.

The fragmentary nature of collage thus allows this art form to unfold into narratives of fragmentation: an especially cogent conclusion with regard to Schwitters’s British-made works. In Schwitters’s *left half of a beauty*, produced also in 1947, a woman’s face disproportionately dominates the work, extending across its centre. The flow of this image is disrupted by a sluice-like grey paper, which cuts through this face, threading a counter-current from the river of the background scenery to the bottom of the work. As such, we feel we are caught between two currents, the collage establishing potentials of flows of movement and beauty, which the action of collage functions to disrupt:

‘oy its famous bridge is the third bigges
h Empire (130,000), after London and’

In this cut-up text found at the bottom of the work, the incomplete clause, ‘after London and’, seems particularly pertinent for

exploring the ways in which the fragmentary action of collage functioned to allow Schwitters to explore his own uncertain life of exile, whereby fixed places became reconfigured as unstable passages in-between. On the whole then, performing the disruption of sensical totalities – faces, sentences, letters, words – and the displacement of materials from utility into elucidatory artistic juxtaposition – envelopes, bus tickets, coins – Schwitters’s art actively translates sensical totalities into nonsensical fragments. These nonsensical fragments form new fragmentary wholes, inviting sense due to their existence within the artistic frame of the collage work.

Collage thus performs as a platform for the construction of narrative through critical engagement, even if that narrative is one of displacement, disjunction and fragmentation. Yet, through reaching this narrative, we are inevitably and endlessly drawn back to a picture plane or surface that makes us re-realise the nonrepresentational status of the work within which we locate this meaningful content. Collage thus seems to establish a dynamic tension between an epistemological space of understanding that it draws us to enter as critics, and the perspectival space of the canvas. Indeed, through the capacity to draw critics into the epistemological space that it creates, and by nature refutes, repudiates, or refuses, collage enacts a shift in our grounds for understanding art. It is permissible to explore the implications of this interpretive shift by aligning collage with ‘modern philosophy’, in line with the thinking of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari:

[...] whereas romantic philosophy still appealed to a formal synthetic identity ensuring a continuous intelligibility of matter (a priori synthesis) modern philosophy tends to elaborate a material of thought in order to capture forces that are not thinkable in themselves. (Deleuze and Guattari 377)

The epistemological space constructed by collage is unthinkable in itself. And as such, we are drawn through collage, back to collage – back to ‘the material of thought’ that lays bare the falsification entailed in the construction of that space beyond the picture plane. The critical implications of this are clearly troublesome: how can we speak about collage without affirming

an epistemological space that the material insistence of collage functions to refute? In the field of Schwitters criticism, this troubling question has seen the falsification of an autonomous concept, enveloping and enclosing his collage works; the circular problem of the self-effacing self-generating synthetic identity of collage has led to a locus of reactive fascination for seeking new and sturdy epistemological grounding within Schwitters's term *Merz*. *Merz* has thus become the synthetic identity of Schwitters's collage works – a strange neologistic breed of an a priori space, ensuring the intelligibility of the matter of collage.

It is the nonsensical nature of *Merz* that allows this term to function as a synthetic identity for otherwise troublingly unthinkable works. The word 'Merz' does not predate the artist Schwitters; indeed, Schwitters produced it early in his career, taking an advertisement for 'KOMMERZ-UND PRIVATBANK', splicing it, and adopting as a word the phoneme 'MERZ' that remained (Schwitters, cited in Themerson 20). The originary *Merz* thus exists only in Schwitters's definitions: 'I called all my pictures as a genre, after the characteristic picture, Merzpictures' (100). 'The word Merz denotes essentially the combination of all conceivable materials for artistic purposes' (Schwitters qtd. Chambers 6). These methodological statements, dressed up as theoretical terminology, abound in citations within Schwitters criticism. And this is no surprise, since the self-given, self-defined, and otherwise unintelligible concept of *Merz* permits critics to refer collage back to this term, the essentially nonsensical meaning of which permits it to perform as sturdy grounds for speaking about collage.

In the context of Schwitters criticism an entire atmosphere of disjunctive definitions of *Merz* are shored up against the ruin of collage critique. We jump at the opportunity to commence defining *Merz*: 'it might refer to the products of low-level commerce that Schwitters found in the gutter' (Taylor 45). *Merz* is offered as, 'part of the verb *ausmerzen* (to eradicate, expel)' (45); *Merz* 'might be linked with the fact of that those fragments have been thrown away or reflected' (45); '*Merz* also rhymes temptingly with *Schmerz*' (45-6). *Merz* is suggested as a reactive force: 'he performed the act of renaming Dada[...] with a neologism of his own: *Merz*' (Dickerman 104); indeed,

Richter offers *Merz* as a creative rebuff to Schwitters's rejection from Dada circles in 1918 (138). Most tellingly, Nick Wadley recently suggested that, 'Merz can mean anything and can mean nothing – nothing can contradict it.' It is this malleability of *Merz* that accounts for Schwitters's eventual 'total Merz world view' (56); due to its nonsensical nature, he was able to stretch *Merz* to extremes of evocation:

I called my new manner of working from the principle of using any material MERZ[...] Later I expanded the title Merz, first to include all my poetry, which I had written since 1917, and finally to all my relevant activities. Now I call myself MERZ (Schwitters qtd. Elderfield 13).

It is easy enough to follow Schwitters down the route of endlessly grounding collage in disparate definitions of *Merz*, resolving the multiple and manifold reality of collage under the terms of a false synthetic unity. Yet, as we do so, we must realise that to ground collage in *Merz* is to ground collage in Schwitters, and thus to make appeal to Schwitters as a 'formal synthetic identity ensuring a continuous intelligibility' of his works. There seems to me to be something basically presumptuous about this appeal, as if Schwitters were a strange human breed of an a priori space, lending form to thoughts of 'forces that are not thinkable in themselves'. Schwitters may be the shadow standing beyond or behind each collage, but it is surely better to remain in silence than to speak as if we might draw sense from those shadows.

In his 2011 publication, *I Swear I Saw This: Drawings in Fieldwork Notebooks, Namely My Own*, Michael Taussig offers a methodological route to perceiving research as a creative pursuit, generated by actively pursuing the manifold reality of our objects of critical study. For Taussig reality *is* cut-up: it was the 'very multiplicity of difference along with its associated fragmentation that was reality' (149). This bifurcation of reality into a set of co-extensive multiple worlds, resolves some of the potentially problematic aspects of Taussig's anthropological fieldwork; whilst the text that this produces dehierarchises its own theoretical grounding through diversifying its objects of study, seeking to describe without attempting to resolve.

In this, I am reminded of the words of Jun'ichurō Tanizaki, in his historicisation of the aesthetics of interior spaces

in Japan: ‘the quality that we call beauty, however, must always grow from the realities of life, and our ancestors, forced to live in dark shadows, presently came to discover beauty in shadows, ultimately to guide shadows towards beauty’s ends’ (29). Accepting the meaninglessness of the term *Merz* is tantamount to accepting the shadows that we are forced into as writers, extending beyond the collage. The interior reflexive journey of critiquing the artworks of Schwitters thus brings us rushing to the doors of this shadowy domain of unthinkable concepts, and upon entering that space we must accept the reality of our theories and ideas as fabrications and falsifications, and through that, embrace our inability to truly narrate or know. John Berger writes of missing a loved one: ‘it is as if your person becomes a place, your contours horizons’ (78). It is as if *Merz* and Schwitters jointly become the inconceivable exterior landscape of our critical practice, to be traversed merely through methods premised on the blind faith of modes resembling things like love or pilgrimage.

Undefining *Merz*

Transcript of a Notebook:

I wonder I might exile myself ~~with~~ from the usual research process ~~from~~

take notes,

order ~~out~~

new structure

a new coherence

~~The Desk.~~

~~The Desk.~~

~~The Desk.~~

Yours Sincerely,

The Author.

*I could see the celluloid reflection of an existent parallel between this *The Usual Enacted Process* and the process of the process of the artist Kurt Schwitters; saw also a difference in what remained of these enactments, in the end: one speaking sense, one defiantly and deeply meaningfully nonsense. For some reason, *Edith and Victor Turner's Image and Pilgrimage* has laid on *The Desk*:*

[...] experience is a journey, a test (of self, of suppositions about others) a ritual passage, an exposure to peril, and an exposure to fear. Does this not sum up something akin to fieldwork, even to pilgrimage, which is, again etymologically, a journey 'through fields' (*per agros*), a kind of peregrination? (Turner and Turner 7)

Five pages of typed quotes from Victor and Edith Turner

Three notebooks

OL7 Explorer Map

A 1972 Olympus OM-1 Camera

Two reels of film

Windermere

Kendal

Silverstone

Matsuo Bashō

A bridge over dry earth; weeds where there might be flowers

the Merzpen with which I Merzwrite on this Merzpaper...

p t h r r r - C h u c k

Inside, a flickering bulb

There was another beginning, cast across the paper as the shadow of the ending:

After many days of solitary wandering, I came at last to the barrier-gate of Shirakawa, which marks the entrance to the northern regions. Here, for the first time, my mind was able to gain a certain balance and composure, no longer a victim to pestering anxiety, so it was with a mild sense of detachment that I thought about the ancient traveller who had passed through this gate with a burning desire to write home. This gate was counted among the three largest checking stations, and many poets had passed through it, each leaving a poem of his own making. (Bashō 105-6)

I carried my notebook to *Schwitters in Britain* in the Tate Britain Gallery. Visitors queued and filed silently into the Tate. Some are tourists. Some are pilgrims. All weave in and around the glass

boxes containing remains and relics; bound up in a communal, kinetic ritual; drawn along on the current of a church or temple, around the embalmed body of a saint or monk.

I am pilgrim.

I am tourist.

I am seeing this.

I am something else.

I carried Bashō on a train journey. Bashō journeys to see with his own eyes the full moon – the full moon that he cherishes in the words of the poet from Kyōto, but becomes instead fraught and overcast by clouds he cannot penetrate. Frustrated, uneasy, his characteristically peaceful resolve shattered, he sits

Cast

under Thick Clouds

The Hapless Moon

with a Wandering priest

and a Masterless youth

and Bashō himself not writing

The priest writes a poem.

Regardless of weather,
The moon shines the same;
It is the drifting clouds
That make it seem different
On different nights. (Bashō 68)

Bashō does not write.

Bashō (*stunned by his own uneasiness, undergoes a poetic and psychological metamorphosis–metempsychosis–into a bat*) ‘which passes for a bird at one time and for a mouse at another’ (Bashō 65).

The enlightened priest is the bird, transcending the reality of the clouds. The mouse sits in their long shadow, earth-bound and in darkness.

I am pilgrim.
I am tourist.
I am seeing this.
I am something else.

C

irculating the room containing the glass boxes and 22 early works of Kurt Schwitters, I drew a line under a poem ~~that I was doodling about the M1 leading North~~ and traced the words ‘Collage as concept’, which I underlined. I began to write about the first work on the wall, but, resistant to the analysis of Schwitters’ collages, became distracted by a visitor speaking the words ‘Compositional Deepening’, words I heard rebound off the glass box across which the image of ‘Halbmond/ Ugelvik’ reflected; thick clouds across the moon. I followed the title with what is perhaps a synthesis of that moment, ‘or conversations in galleries’.

H

ere are two paradigmatic ways of perceiving the shrines of a pilgrimage (Coleman and Eade 4). Number One: glass boxes enshrining objects of deep symbolic value (each Tate visitor making a transformative journey toward the objects that remain as relics of Schwitters’s practice of *Merz*) unified through this into a *communitas*, through the sympathy of common belief (Turner and Turner 10). Number Two: for ‘glass boxes’ read: mirrors, or even vessels (Eade and Sallnow 15). For ‘communitas’, read: ‘there can be no shared meaning or narrative concerning pilgrimage’ (Ross xxxviii).

Uneasy I copy some phonetisca

double-spread from Schwitters's periodical, Merz (no.8).

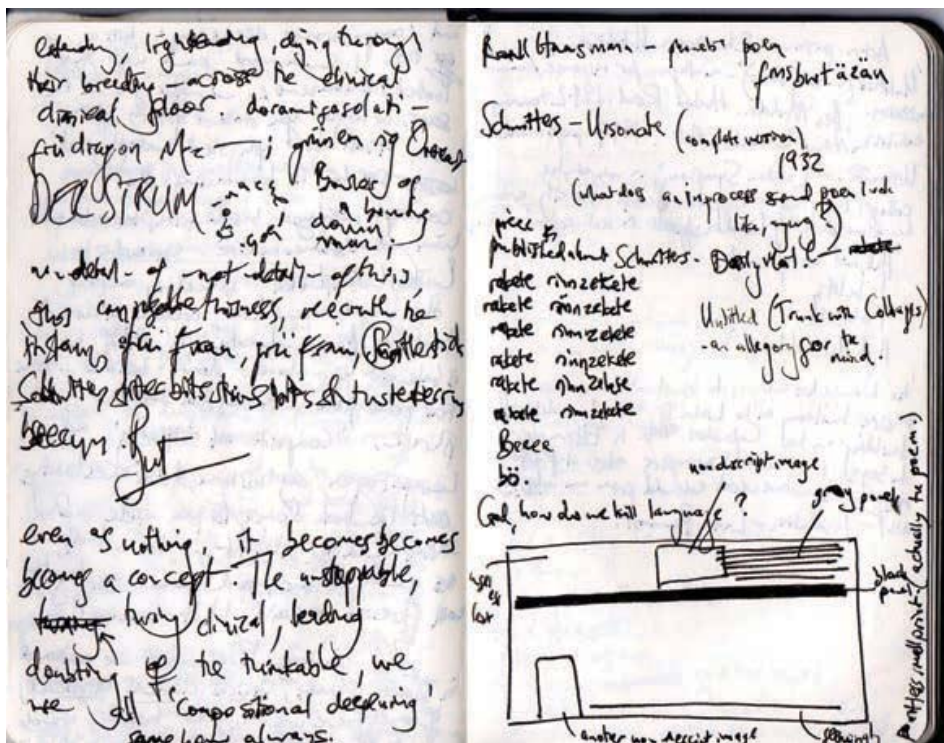


Figure 3: Copying some Merz writings. Author's notebook (2013).

(A bridge over dry earth; weeds where there might be flowers.) Karin Orchard entitles a section of her contribution to the *Schwitters in Britain* catalogue, 'Merz Theory', endeavouring to elucidate 'the concept of Merz that Schwitters set out on the 1940s' (Orchard 59-60). Isabel Schulz is similarly drawn in her entry of the catalogue to conceptualise Merz, exploring: 'Merz constructions', 'Merz art' and 'Merz principles' (Schulz 132). Elsewhere, Dorothea Dietrich writes, 'the house of God – the church or cathedral – has been transformed into a house for Merz. Thus Merz is declared a new religion' (170). (A plastic model of the Virgin Mary. Inside, a flickering bulb.) Indeed, Merz invokes a theoretical joke that is in currency in Schwitters-related writing, particularly in the old and current visitors' books at the Merz Barn: Merz is extracted from its usual contexts and pasted onto the beginning of random words for comical effect.* (the Merzpen with which I Merzwrite on

* I am grateful to Ian Hunter and Celia Larner, founders of Littoral Arts, for permitting me access to their collection of visitors' book, dating back to 2006.

this *Merz*paper...)



Figure 4: Clinical Clinical Clinical. Author's notebook (2013).

Not a method
not a doing,
nor a sense of simply being —
(The sound of a shutter—pthrrr-Chuck!)
We see through celluloid film

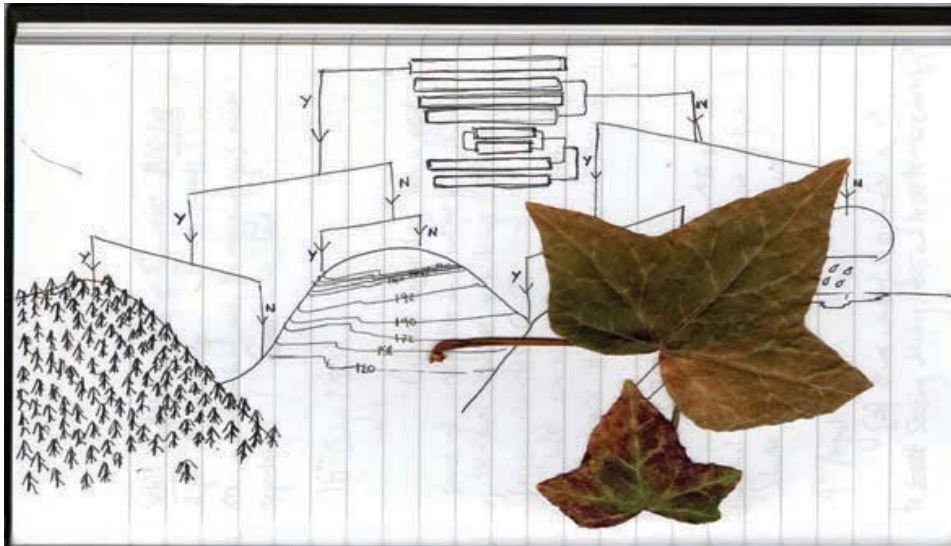


Figure 5: Doodle during Nick Wadley speaking. Author's notebook (2013).

This doodle.
Nick Wadley, speaking.
'Merz can mean anything and can mean nothing
'nothing can contradict it' (Wadley).*
Under the leaf, the key.

* Nick Wadley presented the paper 'Kurt Schwitters and Stefan Themerson' as part of the *Schwitters in context: the British years* symposium at the Tate Britain on 20 April 2013.

In ‘Traveling Theory’, Edward W. Said writes of the process by which radical and reactive theories are re-used, tamed, and domesticated into academic settings (230). Said warns against the circumnavigation of a theory by researchers, warding us from allowing methodological breakthroughs to erupt into theoretical and ideological trappings (244). Wadley highlights a parallel that I see existing between Said’s fears and the actualities of Schwitters research at present. Schwitters theorists are opening Merz to the historically contingent moment of its current usage as a malleable theory, a process that begins to undo its original radicalism as method, to tame its history, poetry and power.

Bashō again. For Bashō, the liminal mode of travel eventually grows into a totalizing theory; ‘travel’ is his poetic worldview, encompassing every field that he as the theorist enters. When he reaches the barrier-gate of Shirakawa, he stops. He faces a moment of critical distance, of resistance to the current that carries him along. And it is here that Bashō the traveller becomes obscured by another: the ancient traveller. With a slip of syntax, Bashō doubles into self and other: he is both present within the journey and ceased somewhere beyond it; he looks in on his own travels. The moment is so rich that each self burns with a desire to write. Indistinct, each self recreating itself as a past cut off as or even through a movement into the future as a kaleidoscope of pairs: shrine and object, pilgrim and witness, performer and anthropologist, theorist and critic, the etic and the emic,—

| | | | | |
|---------------|----|----|----|------------|
| unprecedented | | | | coherence, |
| which | | as | | it |
| to | to | | to | to speak |
| the | | | | method |
| to | | | | re-enact |

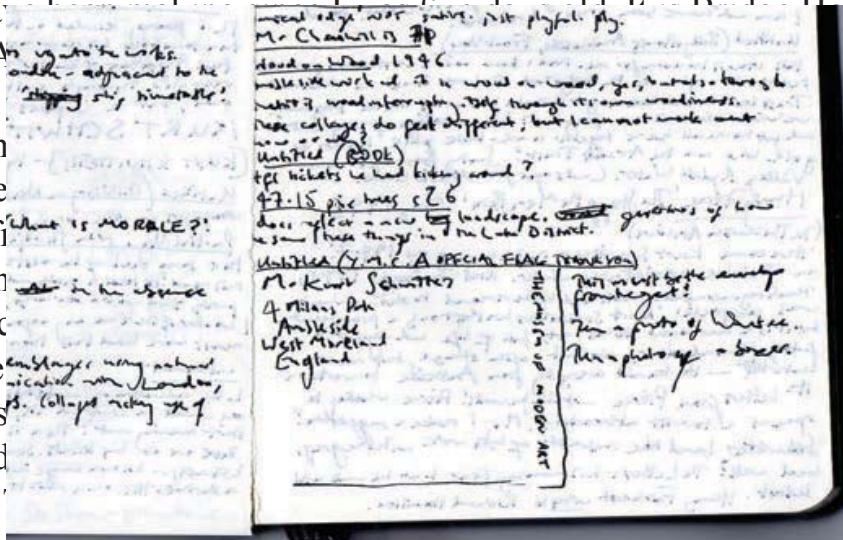
Should we not rather stand?



Figure 6: Bridge house, from memory. Ambleside, Cumbria. Author's own (2013).

Schwitters has an oil painting that I recognise from the memories

I have been thinking about this painting for some time. I use
 in Ambleside, Cumbria, England. I have been thinking about this painting for some time. I use
 our 'stopping site' in Ambleside, Cumbria, England. I have been thinking about this painting for some time. I use
 Cumbria, England. I have been thinking about this painting for some time. I use
 when I was in Ambleside, Cumbria, England. I have been thinking about this painting for some time. I use
 in Ambleside, Cumbria, England. I have been thinking about this painting for some time. I use
 men in Ambleside, Cumbria, England. I have been thinking about this painting for some time. I use
 Stockport, Cheshire, England. I have been thinking about this painting for some time. I use
 free my card the address
 my card the address
 addressed to Mr Kurt Schwitters from the MOMA, pasted to a
 square of wood. In my notebook, I copy down the address as it



appears on the letter.

Said later revised the conclusions of 'Traveling Theory', suggesting that there are indeed instances in which borrowing, adaptation, domestication and taming, are not



Figure 7: 'All sites of pilgrimage have this in common: they are believed to be places where miracles once happened, still happen, and may happen again' (Turner and Turner 6). Millans Park, Cumbria. Author's own (2013).



situations for theory, without facile universalism or over-general totalizing.' (Said, 452)

Figure 8 'A tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist' (Turner and Turner 20). 4 Millans Park, Cumbria. Author's own (2013).

Taussig the travelling anthropologist becomes Taussig the mystic, traversing the exterior, physical landscape of fieldwork, and the interior, mystical journey of theories and ideas. For

Taussig, notebooks are documents of the liminal passage between these worlds, ‘documents that blend inner and outer worlds’ (Taussig xi).

We Undo Our Memories, for this

The lambs came
early this year.
The snow stayed late.
So much of this is
about remembering,
unchristening
memories *how we*
undo ourselves, our
journeys,—undo the
daylight onto the
re-awakened ground—

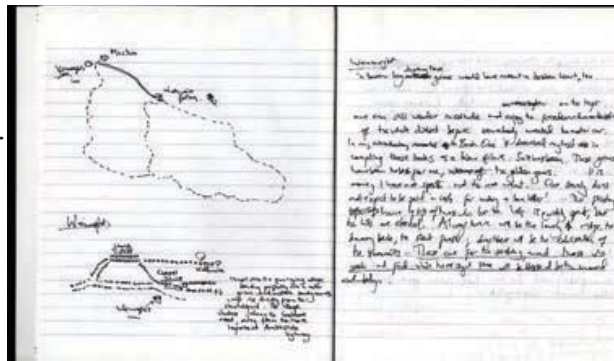


Figure 9: Copy of Wainwright's Chapel Stile. Author's Note book (2013).

The penance post is perhaps a large staff carried by pilgrims.



Figure 10: ‘For many pilgrims, the journey itself is something of a penance’ (Turner and Turner 7). Langdal Valley, Cumbria. Author's own (2013).

Perhaps.



Figures 11-15: Barn Symbolism (1-IV). Sheepfold - Chapel Stile, Cumbria. Author's Own (2013)



Figure 16: ‘The pilgrim “puts on Christ Jesus” as a paradigmatic mask, or persona, and thus for a while *becomes* the redemptive tradition, no longer a biophysical unit with a specific history’ (Turner and Turner 11). Langdale Valley, Cumbria. Author’s own (2013).



Figure 17: ‘To confront, in a special “far” milieu, the basic elements and structures of his faith in their unshielded, virgin radiance’ (Turner and Turner 15). Loughrigg Tarn, Cumbria. Author’s own (2013).



**Figure 18: This Was His Favourite Place. Loughrigg Tarn, Cumbria.
Author's Own (2013)**



**Figure 19: We Drank Along the Way. Loughrigg Tarn, Cumbria.
Author's own (2013).**

In *A Note Upon The Mystic Writing-Pad*, Sigmund Freud describes a trace-receptive surface for recording thoughts and memories. Freud writes, 'If, while the Mystic Pad has writing on it, we cautiously raise the celluloid from the waxed paper, we can see the writing just as clear.' (Freud, 22) This transparent celluloid layer resonates with two intertwined meanings referring both to a synthetic artificiality and to the quality of a film. These two meanings are symbolic of its function within the mechanisms of the *Mystic Writing-Pad*, as the celluloid allows us both to perform the act of writing, and to witness the remains of that performance. Since this layer is merely transparent, we might be drawn to challenge its necessity (Suggested Annotation: *should we not write directly upon the wax? What harm would it do to peel away this transparent layer and intervene directly with the remains that lie beneath?*) The question may arise whether there should be any necessity for the celluloid portion of the cover. Experiment will then show that the thin paper would be very easily crumpled or torn if one were to write directly upon it with the stylus. The layer of celluloid thus acts as a protective sheath. (Freud, 22)

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Figure 20: 'Increasingly circumscribed by symbolic structures [...] underlying the sensorily perceptible symbol-vehicles are structures of thought and feeling' (Turner and Turner 10). Cylinders Estate, Cumbria. Author's own. (2013).

In *A Note Upon The Mystic Writing-Pad*, Sigmund Freud describes a trace-receptive surface for recording thoughts and memories. Freud writes, 'If, while the Mystic Pad has writing on it, we cautiously raise the celluloid from the waxed paper, we can see the writing just as clear.' (Freud, 22) This transparent celluloid layer resonates with two intertwined meanings referring both to a synthetic artificiality and to the quality of a film. These two meanings are symbolic of its function within the mechanisms of the *Mystic Writing-Pad*, as the celluloid allows us both to perform the act of writing, and to witness the remains of that performance. Since this layer is merely transparent, we might be drawn to challenge its necessity (Suggested Annotation: *should we not write directly upon the wax? What harm would it do to peel away this transparent layer and intervene directly with the remains that lie beneath?*) The question may arise whether there should be any necessity for the celluloid portion of the cover. Experiment will then show that the thin paper would be very easily crumpled or torn if one were to write directly upon it with the stylus. The layer of celluloid thus acts as a protective sheath. (Freud, 22)

In *A Note Upon The Mystic Writing-Pad*, Sigmund Freud describes a trace-receptive surface for recording thoughts and memories. Freud writes, 'If, while the Mystic Pad has writing on it, we cautiously raise the celluloid from the waxed paper, we can see the writing just as clear.' (Freud, 22) This transparent celluloid layer resonates with two intertwined meanings, referring both to a synthetic artificiality and to the quality of a film. These two meanings are symbolic of its function within the mechanisms of the *Mystic Writing-Pad*, as the celluloid allows us both to perform the act of writing, and to witness the remains of that performance. Since this layer is merely transparent, we might be drawn to challenge its necessity (Suggested Annotation: *should we not write directly upon the wax? What harm would it do to peel away this transparent layer and intervene directly with the remains that lie beneath?*) The question may arise whether there should be any necessity for the celluloid portion of the cover. Experiment will then show that the thin paper would be very easily crumpled or torn if one were to write directly upon it with the stylus. The layer of celluloid thus acts as a protective sheath. (Freud, 22)



Figure 21: What We Drank Along The Way (II). Chapel Stile, Cumbria. Author's own. (2013).

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